



**SUPPLY
LINE**

The Holocaust

The Holocaust was Nazi Germany's persecution and murder of Europe's Jews. The Nazis also targeted other groups: **Roma and Sinti**, people with disabilities, homosexuals, Poles, **Soviet** prisoners of war, and political and religious objectors. It is estimated that six million Jews and five million others were murdered.

The Nazi Rise to Power

Germany experienced economic hardship following its defeat in the First World War. Germans were also angry about the Treaty of Versailles, which had ended the war, feeling that it punished their country unfairly. Against a backdrop of political turmoil and violent unrest, the Nazi Party emerged. Coming to power in 1933 under leader Adolf Hitler, the Nazis soon established a brutal **dictatorship**.

The Nazis developed policies driven by **nationalism** and racism. They believed in a strong military and the expansion of Germany to include other areas of Europe.

They began influencing and controlling life in Germany more and more.

The Nazis saw many groups as threats to the German nation. Jewish people were the primary targets of their oppression and violence, although Communists, other political opponents, homosexuals and religious objectors were also attacked, as were many people with disabilities.

Nazi Germany built up its military and demanded territory from other countries. Attempts to appease and negotiate with Germany only led to more aggression.

The Second World War and the Holocaust

Nazi Germany's aggression brought about the Second World War. Its invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 led other countries to declare war, including Canada.

At the height of their power, the Nazis and their allies controlled almost all of Europe and large parts of the Soviet Union.

Nazi Germany soon started acting on its beliefs in areas it occupied. This included targeting and killing people who were considered “threats”, especially Jewish people. Mass killings began in the summer of 1941 and became systematic in 1942. The Nazis and their collaborators began to deport Jews from across Europe to death camps.

Canadian forces encountered the Holocaust first-hand near the end of the war in Europe. They liberated Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands. Canadians also accompanied British forces at the liberation of the camp at Bergen-Belsen.

The Holocaust and Canada

In the years before the Second World War, Canadians had begun to learn about what was happening in Germany. Jewish Canadians were especially aware of the dangers and wanted to help Jewish people who were trying to escape the Nazis.

Canada and many other countries had harsh limits on Jewish immigration. **Anti-Semitism** was widespread. In the summer of 1939, more than 900 Jewish refugees aboard an ocean liner, the *St. Louis*, were turned away by Cuba and the United States.

Some Canadians asked the federal government to allow those refugees into Canada. The request was denied, and the ship returned to Europe. Many of the passengers later came under German control, and 254 of them were killed in the Holocaust.

After the war, Canada removed some immigration barriers, although many Canadians still had anti-Jewish opinions. Between 1947 and 1955, Jewish Canadians helped about 35,000 Holocaust survivors and their dependents come to Canada.

Vocabulary

Roma and Sinti:

Some of the people often called “Gypsies” at the time of the Second World War. Most of the Roma who lived in Germany and in the countries it occupied during the war, and who were targeted by Nazi Germany for repression and killing, belonged to the Sinti and Roma family groupings.

Soviet / Soviet Union:

Names used to refer to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991), established in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution. It signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, but became one of the Allies after Germany invaded it in June 1941.

Dictatorship:

An authoritarian government with a single leader or a group of leaders, and little or no political freedom.

Nationalism:

A belief in promoting the interests of a particular nation, and especially its sovereignty over what is seen as its homeland.

Anti-Semitism:

A form of racism that involves prejudice, discrimination, and hostility against Jewish people.

Timeline

1933

The Nazi Party comes to power in Germany, increasing persecution of Jewish people.

SEPTEMBER 1935

The Nuremberg Laws are enacted in Germany. These anti-Semitic laws cause extreme hardship to Germany's Jewish population.

JUNE 1939

The MS *St. Louis*, a ship carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Germany, is turned away from Canada.

SEPTEMBER 1939

The Second World War begins.

MAY 1940

Auschwitz concentration camp established in German-occupied Poland.

JUNE 1941

Germany invades the Soviet Union. Systematic mass killings begin.

JANUARY 1942

The Wannsee Conference, a meeting of high-ranking Nazis, solidifies plans to implement the "Final Solution" involving the systematic murder of Europe's Jews. The Nazis will kill millions in a network of death camps over the next few years.

1945

As they advance, the Allies liberate Nazi concentration camps, including: Auschwitz (January), Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, and Ravensbrück (April), Mauthausen and Theresienstadt (May).

1947-1955

Jewish Canadians help about 35,000 Holocaust survivors and their dependents come to Canada.